**Millennia Ulama Online Knowledge Acquisition and Use in Daily Fatwa Making Habits**

***Abstract - The objective of this study is to find out the relationship between millennial ulama online knowledge acquisition and the use of online knowledge in daily fatwa making habits. This study used a theoretical lens adopted from information technology and Islamic sociology to construct a model to survey millennia generation Ulama in acquiring online Islamic knowledge and fatwa making habits. The surveys were distributed to 90 millennia generation regencies and the city level of Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI). The results show that online social interactions, quality of interaction, and online network with other ulama have significantly affected the millennia generation Ulama Islamic knowledge acquisition. The knowledge, then, is used in daily fatwa making. We conclude that a new generation of Ulama has relied more on online knowledge sources rather than conventional sources such as traditional clerics and books. Further research may need to focus on the behavior of online knowledge access and use by millennia generation Ulama. The limitation of this study is that the sample within the regency level of Majelis Ulama Indonesia at the regency level could not be accessed equally due to time and geographic limitations.***

***Keywords – Online knowledge acquisition, millennia ulama, online fatwa, knowledge use***

I. INTRODUCTION

The presence of the Internet has introduced substantial innovations in the production and consumption of Islamic knowledge. The development of new information technology infrastructure, skills and communication patterns has resulted in the emergence of 'new media ecologies', where established traditional Muslim authorities compete to compete with internet-based charismatic preachers and muftis. Besides that, the condition also shows that the internet, in the long run, has also strengthened the growth of social networking culture online and also at the same time encourages the individualization and privatization of faith. Thus the Internet simultaneously also encourages the adjustment of Islamic knowledge acquisition and compliance with established religious authorities in the online domain[[1-3](#_ENREF_1)].

The Islamic community is no less quick to adopt the Internet than other religious groups for the purposes of disseminating teachings and religious knowledge. However, certain theological teachings have proved more difficult to find in the online context. This is due to the structure of Islam itself, for example, Sunni Islam, unlike Shi'ite Islam, does not have an organized hierarchy in terms of the authority of religious teaching[[4](#_ENREF_4), [5](#_ENREF_5)]. After the emergence of the internet, especially internet generation 2.0, various sites and social networks emerged to share knowledge between users. Islamic fatwa have mushroomed in the online domain. For example, in the beginning of the internet boom only in 1999, around 10,000 fatwa were appearing in the online domain. Then in 2000, the number of online edicts increased rapidly, which was around 14,000 fatwa and the number continued to increase significantly from year to year[[6](#_ENREF_6)].

The presence of online fatwa or online jurisprudence sources has become a major concern for the global community[[7](#_ENREF_7)]. Introduction, growth, and utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have created new public spaces where various concepts of coexistence between Islam and the State are discussed. With regard to cyberspace, the Internet brings issues related to *ijtihad* a sharp focus, when each can proclaim himself as an Islamic authority, is eligible to make statements and issue fatwa. Online religious forums are not exclusively for providing Islamic advice, but also allow Internet users to meet and interact with other people who share their beliefs and values ​​from the privacy of their homes. This article approaches some of these issues and examines how Islamic sites change the decision-making process and construction of Islamic knowledge among Muslims[[7](#_ENREF_7)].

A study conducted by Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN),concluded that the internet is the main reference for millennial generations in religion. This shift is a result of the digital era that shaped the all-new Islamic civilization. The National Survey conducted by the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM) of the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta concluded that the main reference for the millennial generation in religion was the internet [[8](#_ENREF_8)].

The impact of acquiring knowledge of jurisprudence or various issues related to online Islamic law is that religious leaders use that knowledge in giving opinion advice requested by their followers in their daily lives. Giving this opinion includes giving fatwa both on small matters and on the big things requested by Muslims. This phenomenon has been indicated in various previous studies such as Hosen[[9](#_ENREF_9)] and Sisler[[2](#_ENREF_2)]. However, what variables influence millennia ulama generation in the online acquisition of Islamic legal knowledge and they use in daily life fatwa making has not been widely known, especially in the Indonesian context. Therefore, this study aimed to alleviate the disparity in the literature regarding the influence of online knowledge acquisition and use in daily fatwa making by young generation ulama. The study sheds light on how knowledge acquisition among ulama has shifted from generation to generation. The result might help Majelis Ulama Indonesia and Islamic institutions to provide new strategies in new knowledge production.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

*A. Related Studies*

The theoretical lens related to the acquisition of knowledge has been discussed in several previous studies. For example, Boose[[10](#_ENREF_10)]said that at present there is a tendency for people to prefer to access various sources of knowledge online because of the availability of various information technology facilities. The results of research conducted by Yli-Renko, Autio, and Sapienca[[11](#_ENREF_11)] also found that online network and social interaction greatly influenced the acquisition of human knowledge at this time. This shows that more dominant knowledge acquisition is obtained online when someone is connected with other people, both friends, and other experts online. Even in the newspaper context between online and offline, several speakers also acknowledged that they gained more knowledge when reading newspapers online than offline because they were more flexible in gaining knowledge more broadly across geographical boundaries[[12](#_ENREF_12)].

In another study involving experiments with a group of students, it was also found that students who used online means of learning gained more knowledge than students who only relied on conventional sources of knowledge[[13](#_ENREF_13)]. In the global context, the acquisition of knowledge also becomes more effective when individuals build alliances online by contributing to the various knowledge and skills they have in the online domain so that other people can acquire this knowledge and skills[[14](#_ENREF_14)]. For example, the high availability of technological means in Europe has been able to facilitate the mutual activities of various knowledge and skills of fellow Muslim individuals, both men, and women. This phenomenon can be said to be the emergence of the democratization of religious authorities where the authority of Islamic knowledge sources is no longer only for figures in the offline context but also online[[15](#_ENREF_15)]. The source of Islamic knowledge online is then also used to practice religious activities in daily life both related to Ibadan, social, economic, and Islamic law. Previously the source of knowledge was madrasah and mosques[[16](#_ENREF_16)].

In relation to utilizing the knowledge gained online in everyday life, Becker[[1](#_ENREF_1)] gave an example of Salafi activists practicing online discussions, which then acquired the knowledge used in daily life, including for the needs of fatwa. Some researchers even say that the online fatwa itself is also a very useful source of knowledge in helping offline fatwa makers. Literature that discusses online fatwa questions has been widely published, such as Bunt [[17](#_ENREF_17)], Rusli[[18](#_ENREF_18)], and Hosen [[9](#_ENREF_9)].

In this regard, the Internet has become an important communication tool in supporting the expression of Islamic concepts and identities of Muslims ranging from forming organizations online to issuing various statements by Muslim individuals. They created online knowledge sites to introduce various issues to Islam and study Islam through this electronic media[[19](#_ENREF_19)]. With the existence of these sites, more and more new authorities are born in acting apart from conventional ones[[20](#_ENREF_20)]. The importance of technology and various innovations in building Islamic knowledge bases have been explained in various works of literature. However, most of the countries with the majority of Muslim occupations lack technological infrastructure in absorbing, implementing and creating a knowledge base and disseminating it to the public[[21](#_ENREF_21)]. Online sites to Islam in various developed countries can help Muslims access various knowledge.

*B. Millennia Generation*

Howe and Strauss[[22](#_ENREF_22)] first defined the term Millennials as a particular generation group in America that was born between 1980 or 1982 and 1999, which has certain characteristics that are considered different from the previous generation. Howe and Strauss[[22](#_ENREF_22)] previously divided generations into 3 groups: the Silent generation (1925-1945), Baby Boomer (1946-1964), and Generation X (1965-1979). According to this generation category, the key to understanding each generation group is to look at socio-economic developments in the period they lived.

While Ling Lim[[23](#_ENREF_23)] divides generations into four groups, namely Traditionalists - 1925-1945. Baby Boomer - 1946-1964, Generation X - 1965-1979. Y Generation - 1980-1999, and Generation Z - births starting in 2000. In this case, the millennia generation starts from generation Y and so on. This millennial generation has characteristics that, among others, live in a digital world, have a strong national identity, are conservative, family and career-oriented, highly committed to education, and experience strong financial pressures[[23](#_ENREF_23)] (Ling Lim, 2012). Other studies of the Millennial generation say that they were raised as a special group, received excessive attention from their parents, very confident, competitive, and optimistic to realize their great ideals[[24](#_ENREF_24)].

*C. Online Knowledge Sources*

Internet facilitates the creation and dissemination of knowledge, especially with the presence of four main driving pillars, namely open systems, virtual channels, multiple user involvement (multi-user engagement), and extensive adjustment capabilities to enable anyone to be involved in the process of forming and disseminating knowledge [[25](#_ENREF_25)]. Open systems allow people to be involved in creating applications for the dissemination of knowledge without limitation such as blogs, while virtual channels help people communicate for free through Internet channels. Furthermore, the community can interact in bulk at once and various sites can be adjusted to the needs of each individual, for example, the community can make personal or group sites according to their respective missions.

However, in the process of creation (creation) and sharing (sharing) of knowledge, the most important thing to do is to create trust in a source of information or knowledge. Previous research shows that of the 485 respondents surveyed there was a positive relationship between public trust in the owners of a Blog and the knowledge sharing habits they did[[26](#_ENREF_26)]. This means that in the context of sharing Islamic knowledge (Islamic knowledge sharing), the issue of trust in the source of knowledge in the online domain is also very important so that people want to use a source of knowledge such as websites, blogs, and others. For example, identity in the possession of a blog or website should be someone who is trusted in terms of Islam both in the fields of Islamic law, *tawhid*, Islamic education, and other fields. Thus the Internet can become a database of knowledge data in the dissemination of public knowledge[[27](#_ENREF_27)].

In the context of Islamic knowledge, the presence of online knowledge sources has given rise to a paradigm in terms of knowledge-making authority to Islam. The internet has helped bring harmony between 'traditional' knowledge-making authorities and Internet-based mufti, online fatwa databases, and individual Islamic blogs[[2](#_ENREF_2)]. That is to say, the war of traditional clerics who could not reach the *ummah* in large numbers could be helped by scholars who were present online to share their knowledge.

Online Islamic sites have been effective media in disseminating knowledge. Research shows there are more than one million visits to Islamic sites in a day[[2](#_ENREF_2)]. These Islamic sites provide various topics of sources of Islamic knowledge and fatwa online. Fatwa circulating online are related to family law [[5](#_ENREF_5)], related to radical Salafism[[18](#_ENREF_18)], and online shopping law[[9](#_ENREF_9)]. Besides that, there are also a number of sites that provide fiqh related question and answer activities related to various topics such as https://islamqa.info/en, http://www.fatwaislam.com/fis/, https://www.sistani.org/ english / qa /. These sites can be easily accessed by Muslims who want to ask various things related to Islamic law.

*D. Theoretical Constructs*

The theoretical constructs of this study are made up of three sources of online Islamic knowledge sources and one variable that influences knowledge use in daily fatwas making. The research model was adapted from Yli-Renko, et al[[11](#_ENREF_11)], Montenery[[28](#_ENREF_28)], Mansur, et al[[29](#_ENREF_29)], Sisler[[2](#_ENREF_2)], Soukup[[4](#_ENREF_4)], and Taylor[[30](#_ENREF_30)] . However, the contents of theoretical constructs have been adapted in the context of Islam because the context of this study is to determine the correlation between accesses to sources of knowledge of jurisprudence online with the provision of fatwa.

The first step was to find out whether variables such as interaction with the *ummah*, the quality of interactions, and connections with other scholars in the online domain influence the knowledge acquisition of millennia scholars. Then the results of the online knowledge acquisition that were obtained differed from different online sources influence the millennial scholars in giving daily fatwas. Finally, the research model is constructed as shown in figure 1:



Figure 1. Theoretical constructs

III. METHOD

The sample of this study is 90 millennia ulama recruited from Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) within regencies in Central Sulawesi. The millennia ulama have been involved in Junior ulama training and has also actively involved in fatwa making. The millennia ulama were recruited from thirteen regencies and cities across Central Sulawesi. Questioners were distributed using online facilities such as WhatsApp, Facebook chat, and email base on the contact provided by MUI administrators at the provincial level. Samples were selected using quota sampling techniques from each MUI in regencies and cities. In quota sampling [e.g: [31](#_ENREF_31), [32](#_ENREF_32)], all populations are divided according to appropriate strata such as gender, age, sex, geography, and others [[33](#_ENREF_33)].

The data which was derived from the distribution of questionnaires to the millennia ulama related to the influence of the level of social interaction, the quality of interactions, and connections with other ulama, then analyzed by using a statistical approach mainly by using SPSS applications[[34](#_ENREF_34), [35](#_ENREF_35)].Data was obtained based on three variables that influence online knowledge acquisition and the use of knowledge in daily fatwas making habits as shown in the research model.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*A. Online Knowledge Acquisition*

The findings show that the three variables; online social interaction, quality of interaction with *the ummah*, and online network with other ulama have significantly influenced millennia ulama to acquire knowledge from online sources (see figure 2). Eighty percent of millennia ulama admit that their interaction with Muslim communities in online space influence to acquire new knowledge of Islamic teaching. We found that online discussion and distribution of information have become a new source of knowledge as found by[[36](#_ENREF_36), [37](#_ENREF_37)]. Other studies such as ([[38](#_ENREF_38), [39](#_ENREF_39)] also argue that since the emergence of Internet 2.0 which enables online discussion and content sharing has created a new source of knowledge.

A higher significant number of millennia ulama (92%) agree that the quality of interaction in the online world with ummah strongly affects their knowledge acquisition. Quality of interaction is determined by the frequency they share, distribute, and discuss information in the online platform [[40](#_ENREF_40), [41](#_ENREF_41)]. The current generation tends to share various information through an online platform such as closed discussion groups. For example, some Muslim communities tend to create WhattApps or Facebook groups to share religious content (nurdin and Rusli). The information sharing and distribution encourage millennia ulama to discuss the information content which then becomes a source of knowledge. In some cases, Muslim communities set a regular time to discuss Islamic teaching in a virtual environment.

Meanwhile, the online network of millennia ulama with their online colleagues have also significantly influenced their decision to acquire Islamic knowledge from their similar professional colleagues. Currently, most of the ulama share and distribute their preaching content through online space. For example, Nurdin & Rusli[[42](#_ENREF_42)] found that the majority of well-known ulama, such as Aa Gym, Abdul Shomad, AdiHidayat, IlahamArifin, and Khalid Bin Salamah have shared their preaching content through Youtube and Blog. Most of millennia ulama follow those popular ulama sharing and contents.



 Figure 2. Variables influence on knowledge acquisition and use

*B. Knowledge Use*

Our study found that 86% of millennia ulama who obtain knowledge from online sources use it in their daily fatwa making or answering Muslim citizen’s questions regarding Islamic fiqh and other Islamic teaching issues. The relationship between knowledge acquisition and use in daily social life have been discussed in previous studies [e.g: [43](#_ENREF_43), [44](#_ENREF_44)]. Acquiring various Islamic fiqhknowledge sources from online social interaction, interaction with Muslim communities, and network with other ulama has increased millennial ulamafiqh knowledge and improve their ability to make fatwa in their daily preaching.

From the survey, we found that most of the millennia ulamahave heavily relied on online knowledge sources, such as YouTube, senior ulama personal Blog, and online social network content sharing, in providing daily fatwa to their ummah. The findings highlight that there is an increase in public trust (millennia ulama) in the owners of a Blog and social media site (senior ulama), and the knowledge sharing habits they did [[26](#_ENREF_26)]. More importantly, when the trust of online knowledge sources is high, millennia ulama might continually use the knowledge in daily fatwa making. The trust helped bring harmony between traditional ulama and millennia ulama providing and sharing Islamic fiqh knowledge as argued by Sisler[[2](#_ENREF_2)]. In this regard, the presentation on Millennia ulama in the online world can help traditional ulama distributing Islamic knowledge to the larger ummah.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study proved that millennia ulama have heavily relied on online social interaction, quality of interaction with their ummah, and their online connection with other ulama to acquire Islamic knowledge sources. They use the online knowledge to make fatwa or to answer Muslim community questions relating to fiqh issues in daily life. We argue that online knowledge sources might become new virtual teachers for millennia ulama. Traditional knowledge sources such as traditional ulama and conventional discussion in Islamic boarding schools and mosques might have been reduced their function in Islamic knowledge provision.

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